

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 1-24 are considered in the Office action.

The abstract has been objected to because it contains multiple paragraphs and is unduly long.

Claims 1, 4, 13 and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Mastie et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,498,656 ("Mastie").

Claims 2, 5, 14 and 17 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Mastie in view of Utsunomiya U.S. Patent Publication No. 2004/0042042 ("Utsunomiya").

Claims 3 and 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Mastie in view of Roberts et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,650,431 ("Roberts").

Claims 6, 12, 18 and 24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Mastie in view of Kageyama et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,625,757 ("Kageyama").

Claims 7-8, 11, 19-20 and 23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Mastie in view of Owa et al. U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0043357 ("Owa").

Claims 9 and 21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Mastie in view of Yacoub U.S. Patent No. 6,452,692 ("Yacoub").

Claims 10 and 22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Mastie in view of Yamaguchi et al U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0123079 ("Yamaguchi").

Summary of the Reply

Applicants have amended claims 1, 13 and 20-22 to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention.

Reply to Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1, 4, 13 and 16 have been rejected under § 102(e) as anticipated by Mastie. Amended independent claims 1 and 13 recite methods and apparatus for printing a print job, the methods and apparatus searching a network to determine a plurality of

available printers, selecting a plurality of the available printers to create a printer pool, selecting a plurality of printers in the printer pool to create a printer group, determining to which of the printers in the printer group the print job is to be transmitted to balance the print job based upon a load balancing scheme, transmitting the print job to the determined printers based on the load balancing scheme, and printing the print job by the determined printers. Mastie does not describe or suggest the claimed invention.

Instead, Mastie describes a network printing system 2 that includes client computers 4a-4c that may be used to submit print jobs to a print manager 6, which determines the logical printers that are capable of printing the print job. (Col. 3, lines 62-66; Col. 4, lines 43-45; Col. 5, lines 45-47). A logical printer relates a queue to one or more physical printers 12a-12d, and groups physical printers 12a-12d that share a common set of print attributes and can print jobs having such common print attributes in a consistent manner. (Col. 5, lines 47-51). Printer manager 6 uses a rule-based criteria that may be used to load balance the print workload by selecting logical printers whose physical printers 12a-12d have low use. (Col. 6, lines 1-3; Col. 6, lines 45-48). Upon selecting a logical printer, printer manager 6 routes the print job to the queue for that logical printer. (Col. 6, lines 7-10). The queue then spools the print job to one of the physical printers associated with the logical printer. (Col. 5, lines 51-54; cf. Col. 5, lines 57-59 and FIG. 2a (a single queue print jobs from one logical printer to one of many physical printers); Col. 5, lines 59-61 and FIG. 2b (a single queue routes print jobs from multiple logical printers to a single physical printer); and Col. 5, lines 61-63 and FIG. 2c (multiple queues, each routing print jobs from one logical printer to one physical printer)).

Unlike the claimed invention, however, Mastie does not describe or suggest anything regarding searching a network to determine a plurality of available printers, selecting a plurality of the available printers to create a printer pool, or selecting a plurality of printers in the printer pool to create a printer group. Further, Mastie does not describe or suggest anything about determining to which of the printers in a printer group the print job is to be transmitted to balance the print job based upon a load balancing scheme, or transmitting the print job to the determined printers based on the load balancing scheme. At most, Mastie describes load balancing print jobs between multiple logical printers that each include physical printers that share common print

attributes, but does not describe or suggest load balancing print jobs between actual physical printers that may not necessarily share such common print attributes.

Because Mastie does not describe or suggest the claimed invention, applicants respectfully request that the §102(e) rejection of claims 1, 4, 13 and 16 be withdrawn.

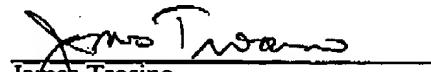
Reply to Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 2-3, 5-12, 14-15 and 17-24 have been rejected under § 103(a) as obvious over Mastie variously in view of Utsunomiya, Roberts, Kageyama, Owa, Yacoub and Yamaguchi. None of the cited references, however, alone or combined, describe or suggest the claimed invention. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the § 103(a) rejection of claims 2-3, 5-12, 14-15 and 17-24 be withdrawn.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated above, applicants submit that this application, including claims 1-24, is allowable. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner allow this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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